

Close Encounters of the AI Kind: Use of AI Influencers As Brand Endorsers

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Abstract

Abstract Brand endorsers can contribute to a brand's success or failure (in the case of endorser transgressions). Recent advancements in technology have produced new, nonhuman alternatives to traditional celebrity endorsers. These new endorsers rely on artificial intelligence (AI) to interact with and influence consumers. Two studies demonstrate that AI influencers can produce positive brand benefits similar to those produced by human celebrity endorsers. Moreover, just like their human counterparts, AI influencers can also commit transgressions that result in degradation of the endorsed brand. Importantly, though, AI influencers differ from human celebrity endorsers in that consumers are less likely to view them as unique entities (as tested in a pilot study). Thus, consumers are more likely to perceive a transgression committed by an AI influencer as behavior applicable to all AI influencers, but they are less likely to view celebrity endorser behaviors as interchangeable. As such, after an AI influencer has committed a transgression, replacing the AI influencer with a celebrity endorser attenuates negative brand perceptions, an effect which cannot be realized if the replacement is another AI influencer.